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C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 001363

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: AS SOCIALISTS FAIL AMID POLITICAL CHAOS,
SIMEON MOVEMENT GETS ITS CHANCE TO FORM GOVERNMENT

REF: A. (A) SOFIA 1134

[B.](#) (B) SOFIA 1325

[C.](#) (C) SOFIA 1329

[D.](#) (D) SOFIA 1339

Classified By: Jeffrey D. Levine for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A hostile opposition rejected the minority government of Socialist PM-designate Sergei Stanishev in a dramatic 117 to 118 vote shortly before midnight July 27. The Socialists, who overplayed their hand with an elaborate scheme to secure votes for their proposed minority government, admitted defeat July 28 after a night of chaos that threatened a constitutional crisis. President Georgi Purvanov will now ask the party of PM Simeon Saxe-Coburg, as the second largest parliamentary group, to form a government. The escalation of tension and the dilution of power among seven parties, however, indicate it will be difficult for Simeon to form a cabinet without a substantial improvement in the political climate. If this attempt fails, Bulgaria could face early elections. END SUMMARY

SIMEON,S CHANCES UNCERTAIN

[1](#)2. (C) With the failure of the Socialists to form a government, the mandate now passes to the former king,s National Movement for Simeon II (NMSS) (Ref. A). The NMSS must either turn for support to the Socialists, who, following the dramatic developments over the past days, vow they will not back a NMSS cabinet, or the fragmented center-right. The latter case would also require either the predominantly Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF), or the extreme nationalist group Ataka. MRF, the junior coalition partner in the incumbent government, has publicly ruled out backing Simeon for a second term. A member of the NMSS Political Council told us they will first turn to the Socialists. He believed the NMSS would not insist on Simeon as the Prime Minister, which might improve its chances of coming to agreement with the Socialists. Stanishev, he said, is no longer an option.

NEXT STEPS

[1](#)3. (SBU) There is no set deadline for the President to ask the second place group to form a government. If the NMSS fails to propose a cabinet within seven days of being asked, or if the parliament fails to approve its government line-up, Purvanov, at his discretion, tasks one of the other parliamentary groups to nominate a PM. If it comes to this scenario, analysts agree the chances of forming a government are negligible. If the third attempt to form a government fails, the President appoints a caretaker government, dissolves parliament and schedules new elections. New elections would take a minimum of two months and likely jeopardize the reforms needed for a 2007 EU entry. This possibility is a nightmare for all parties and should increase their motivation to arrive at an accord.

MIDNIGHT VOTE

[1](#)4. (U) After a tense eight-hour debate June 27 and a 24-hour standoff the previous day (ref C), MPs decided on a complex voting procedure with two separate anonymous votes) one on Stanishev's PM nomination and the second on his proposal for a government line-up (Ref. C, D). The Socialist leader's nomination as prime minister was approved by a single vote (120 to 119). In a dramatic midnight twist, however, the MPs then rejected the government line-up proposed by Stanishev with 118 votes against and 117 votes in favor. The negative outcome of this second vote, announced at 2:00 a.m., meant, according to most analysts, an overall rejection of the Socialist-led government. In a last-ditch attempt at power, the Socialists demanded a repeat of the government vote, citing irregularities in the first. After their proposal was rejected, and Parliament failed to achieve a quorum the morning of July 28, the Socialists acknowledged defeat.

[1](#)5. (U) The Socialists had been forced to form a minority government with only the MRF after month-long coalition talks with Simeon,s party collapsed (Ref. B). In an address to parliament July 28, Stanishev blamed the opposition for its irresponsibility8. He said a stable government backed by this parliament was impossible without the participation of

the BSP and MRF. Stanishev, in a nod to possible early elections, laid the blame on opposition leaders and stressed the need for nationally responsible behavior⁸ that would keep Bulgaria on track for accession to the EU.

SCHEMES, PASSIONS AND CHAOS: THE UNDOING OF THE SOCIALISTS

16. (C) The Socialist's plan to elect its minority government rested on back-room maneuverings to hold a secret vote. Rarely used in previous post-communist parliaments, they believed the secret ballot would allow individual MPs from

other parties to augment their coalition's 116 MPs in the 240-seat parliament. BSP insiders have told us privately they had arranged the support of a handful of MPs from the center-right Bulgarian People's Union to secure the decision on the secret vote. Another few MPs, from nationalist group Ataka, were then supposed to back the government in the secret vote. The plan quickly became obvious and a number of

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factors, including reports that three Ataka MPs were locked in a room by their party colleagues to prevent them from backing the Socialists, brought the plan to ruin. Passions escalated further when opposition MPs physically prevented Socialist MPs from taking the floor to request a repetition of the vote for the government.

17. (C) COMMENT: In this charged political environment the final outcome is still difficult to predict. The Socialist move to press their advantage late last week backfired, but Simeon's party seems no better positioned. All possible scenarios require the parties, which are currently passionately antagonistic towards each other, to set aside their bitterness and join in a common cause. Despite his humiliation during the vote, Stanishev's decision to return the mandate, at least for now, has him looking the most responsible. He has already begun the political gamesmanship of assigning blame to Simeon in anticipation of possible early elections. President Purvanov has also suffered from these events. Political insiders agree that his insistence on the MRF's presence in the coalition) in order to win its support for his 2006 re-election campaign, contributed greatly to breakdown of the initial coalition talks that led to the Socialist's failure.